

A Feeling Of Unbridled Optimism



From the Executive Corner

by DOUG BURGE

For the past three to four weeks, I have—along with our partners from Barretts Equine Sales—visited over 70 farms located throughout the state, inspecting yearlings for this year's second edition of California's October Yearling Sale. The welcome that we received from the local breeders, along with a strong feeling of optimism, was refreshing and unlike anything I have experienced over the past 11 years.

The majority of the larger commercial farms are full, the training barns are at or even exceeding capacity, and the overall investment in quality breeding stock continues to substantially move forward.

Yes, concerns obviously still exist for the long-term future of horse racing and the need for assistance to further improve the economics associated with the production and ownership of horses. However, fueled by the strength of the CTBA's lucrative Cal-bred programs, and the demand for our product based on the excellent racing and sales results across the country, breeders seem bullish on the prospects ahead.

In fact we have seen numerous examples of in-foal mares who were either recently purchased out of state or brought back to California to take advantage of the benefits that currently exist. Certain farms in Southern California are relocating, rather than leaving the state or even the Thoroughbred business itself, and numerous farms are pursuing the possible acquisition of marketable stallions.

As the third largest foal-producing state in the country, and the provider of over 50 percent of the horses currently running at California tracks, these positive trends are vital to the future success of racing in the Golden State.

The entire horse racing industry has been working together to further enhance purses and incentive awards and believe we have a solution with the introduction of AB 2409 Yee, the legislation for Instant Horse Racing (IHR).

IHR is pari-mutuel wagering on historic horse races; similar to the way wagering is done on live racing today. Using facilities already at California tracks, this new kind of wager can be placed on tens of thousands of historic races. Players are provided the same handicap information they use with live races and they choose from the same wagers and combinations. Instant Horse Racing simply takes wagering into the 21st century, using the latest technology to facilitate wagering on historic races.

The revenue from IHR will be divided among all sectors of the horse racing industry and the communities around the tracks. Exactly how much revenue will be generated is still unknown, but the primary goal of the program is to generate new income to help support California's important horse racing industry. Instant Horse Racing has been extremely successful in other states and it is projected that similar results would be realized in the Golden State.

The combination of the existing increased investment of quality breeding stock mentioned above, coupled with the prospects of better economic return through IHR revenues, will certainly assist in growing and improving breeding and racing in California.

This strong feeling of optimism should continue. 🐾



CTBA Executive Vice President and General Manager Doug Burge with the Barretts Equine Sales Team of Vice President of Sales Kim Lloyd and President and General Manager Gerald McMahon (left to right)